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# **Two different Western-European rural models for the house-family bond: Peasants, labourers and tradesmen in Westphalia (North-western Germany) and Groningen (North-Netherlands), 1780 – 1860**

*Christine Fertig (University of Münster) and Richard Paping (University of Groningen)*

Preliminary version<sup>1</sup>

Proposal ESHD Conference, Leuven 21-24 September 2016

## **Abstract**

This paper aims at comparing relationships between families and houses, focusing on the house-family bond in rural societies. This approach goes beyond the discussion of the land-family bond by integrating the non-peasant population of premodern countryside that had been overlooked so far. We want to suggest that this relationship can adhere to two completely different models in premodern villages in north-western Europe. These two models we illustrate with two contrasting cases situated in the Dutch province of Groningen and in the Prussian province of Westphalia, for which we did in-depth research for different social groups. In Groningen, houses were perceived as capital goods, floating on markets for real estate, bought and sold up to prevailing situations of families and individuals. Consequently, the house-family bond was rather weak in this market-oriented economy. In Westphalia, on the contrary, especially peasant families were strongly attached to their farms and houses, considering them as fixed capital, keeping them within the family as its economic basis and connecting to them as a social unit. Within lower class social groups in both regions – labourers and non-agrarian rural occupational groups – there was a relatively less strong relation between the family and the dwellings they lived in. Consequently, with the growth of these social groups in the course of the nineteenth century and the rising importance of the market the low-attachment (market-oriented) model increased in importance at the expense of the family-oriented model, especially in north-west Germany, not so much because of its attractiveness, but mainly due to the impossibility for a rising part of the rural families to keep control of the dwellings they lived in.

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version has been presented at the Rural History Conference, Girona September 2015. Our aim is to revise this preliminary paper considerably for the ESHD conference, including a broader more international comparative introduction and an extension of the data processes.

# 1. Introduction

In agricultural societies farmsteads and land constitute the core of the economic system, and form the main source of wealth. The amount of land at disposal (either owned or rented) is decisive, not only determining social status, but also as the main means of existence, influencing the standard-of-living. Consequently, the system that organizes the distribution of the control of land between the inhabitants is of utter importance for the well-being of different groups of people in society. However, as the distribution of land is in nearly every region very unequal, it is not only the control of land and farmsteads, but also of houses as places to live, give shelter and often to work that play a large role, especially for the poorer parts of the population.

The central systems of organising life in the countryside are household and family, the latter either defined as the conglomerate of all near and more distant relatives, or as the group of (related) persons living in a household. The last definition points already at the importance of the house, as the place where near family members (husband, wife and children, but perhaps also grandfathers, grandmothers, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces) are living together and are organising joint consumption and perhaps also production. In this paper we want to investigate what role the house as a building (with or without land) actually played for rural families from different social signature, and how this changed over time. In this respect we will use the expression “house-family bond” to indicate the strength of the relation between a specific dwelling – whether a farmstead or just an ordinary house – and a family over time. In literature the phrase the more restrictive phrase “land-family bond” has been used, which limited the discussion to the continuity of land ownership within a family. For early-modern England the concept even provoked a little debate (among others Macfarlane 1984; Sreenivasan 1991; 1995; Hoyle 1995; Whittle 1998) that suggests that with the bond between family and land at least was not extremely strong and also diminished since the middle ages in England.

There are also numerous studies concentrating on inheritance practises of farmers, the continuity of families on specific farms and the land market (for instance Van Bavel & Hoppenbrouwers 2004) in continental Europe before 1900. Most of these studies stress – in contrast with England – the enormous importance of family continuity on farmsteads (among many others Schlumbohm 1994; De Haan 1994; Arrizabalaga 2005; Dribe & Lundh 2005; Fauve Chamoux 2006). However, studies for Bohemia (Zeitlhofer 2007; Velková 2008) show that already about one third of the farmsteads were going to non-relatives. Sabeau (1990); Rouette (2003); Brakensiek (2004) and Boudjabaa (2008) show for communities in southern Germany, Switzerland and western France that there could be a quite vivid land market, where numerous parcels were sold to non-relatives. Our previous research show on the one hand a very strong tendency to family continuity on farms (88% family) in some Westphalian villages (Fertig & Fertig 2006), while it was quite low on farmsteads in some villages in Groningen (39% family) and even more so in nearby Drenthe (30% family) (Paping & Karel 2011).

Next to these large regional differences, there are also good reasons to think that the relation between the house and the family differed between social groups as well. Taking this into account, we will argue in this paper that at least two different models of relationships

between house and family within north-western Europe can be distinguished, whose relevance depend on both the region as the social group studied.

On the one hand we observe a market-oriented model, which is especially of importance in the Dutch coastal countryside we studied, where houses and farms were quite easily sold. This model will also have been relevant for early-modern England. We researched seven small villages in the Eastern Marne situated in the province of Groningen, a part of the previously relatively very wealthy and modern coastal Netherlands; however, in the end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century the Dutch were losing their prime position rapidly. Nevertheless, the agriculture in Dutch coastal countryside remained heavily market-oriented.

On the other hand we will present a family-oriented model, where peasants and house owners made every effort to keep the real estate within the family. For this model we concentrate ourselves on two larger Westphalian villages lying 90 kilometres apart in the interior of Germany, a country that was in the first half of the century slowly recovering economically, although industrialisation was still to come. Since both villages were part of the Western Prussian province of Westphalia, they had similar (although not identical) institutional and political conditions, but their economic structure differed considerably. The economy of the quite wealthy village of Borgeln is solely based on agriculture, both for regional markets and for self-provision, while in the economy of the much poorer village of Löhne proto-industry was of great importance. The region of Groningen and Westphalia were not very far apart (about 250 kilometres), nevertheless, they show strongly diverging patterns of the house-family bond.

The article aims at fathoming out the scope of action inside the field of this house-family bond by exploring the two geographical cases mentioned. After giving a more in depth overview of the societies studied, we are first going to look at what role the house as a building played in the family economy (comprising both consumption and production). Second, we investigate the form and degree of attachment of families to houses in practise, by looking at the succession of heads of households living in a building. Next, we consider the role of the house and farm in the local social welfare and retirement system. We will discuss these items, taking into account not only geographical differences, but differences between rural social groups as well. Eventually, we will try to draw some more general conclusions on the two strongly diverging systems of the relation between family and house existing in Western-Europe that show up in the material we studied.

## **2. The local rural economies of Westphalia and Groningen compared**

### **2.a. Population, sources of income, property rights, marital and inheritance laws**

#### Population

Both the Westphalian and Groningen countryside experienced considerable population growth from the last decades of the eighteenth century onwards. Up until the last quarter of the nine-

teenth century population increased by about 1% annually in both regions. As the number of farmsteads in both regions increased only to a limited extent, this population growth mainly resulted in a rising share of farm labourer households. Numerous tiny labourer houses were being built in this period, villages grew enormously in size, and new settlements of a few small houses located nearer to the farmsteads came into being, like a hamlet literally called ‘Kleine Huisjes’ (small houses) in Kloosterburen (Groningen) or the houses for ‘*Heuerlinge*’ in Eastern Westphalia. In comparison, population growth in the Westphalian countryside slowed down earlier than in Groningen, mainly due to out-migration starting in the middle of nineteenth century. In the Groningen countryside this net out-migration started also by that time, often to the United States or to the cities as well, but became really massive only from 1880 onwards.

*Table 1: Development of social structure and population in the Marne, Borgeln and Löhne*

Table 1. Development of social structure and population in the Marne, Borgeln and Löhne												
	Groningen				Westphalia							
	Marne				Borgeln				Löhne			
Popula- tion	1807		1862		1790-1819		1820-1849		1790-1819		1820-1849	
	4,889		7,554		1,255		1,496		1,219		1,466	
	Households				Families				Families			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
farmers	198	20	217	14	78	39	69	29	73	46	89	38
labourers	376	37	669	43	93	47	108	46	66	42	132	56
tradesmen	436	43	c675	43	28	14	60	25	18	12	14	6
Total	1010	100	c1561	100	199	100	237	100	157	100	235	100

NB: Estimated from Paping (1995) 322, 325; Fertig (2007) 61. Eastern Marne forms about half the 3 municipalities in the Marne (Leens, Kloosterburen and Ulrum). Tradesmen include all non-agricultural households. Farmer households also include small farmers starting new farms (Löhne and Borgeln). Numbers for Westphalia are based on two family reconstitutions, since household lists are not available. Families (in the Westphalian villages) are couples having at least one child during the period (earliest birth if they had numerous children), with information on the fathers’ occupation.

#### Non-peasants and sources of income

Many families in Groningen and in Westphalia depended upon incomes offside farm management. In the two Westphalian cases incomes of landless or land-poor families were still obtained by activities based in agriculture. In Eastern Westphalia (Löhne), families both cultivated grain and flaxseed on their farm and processed them, or they lived mainly from spinning and weaving. Only few people were referred to as bakers, smiths, carpenters, or millers. In Borgeln, most people lived from agricultural day labouring, but here we find in the course of the nineteenth century a growing group of craftsmen. However, these craftsmen also often worked in agriculture at least part of their time and during seasonal work peaks. The local economy was mainly based on the production of cash crops, and a substantial part of the local society was dependent on the labour market and on product markets.

In Groningen many households were mainly depending on non-agrarian sources of income. Numerous artisans (tailors, shoemakers, smiths, coopers, bakers, carpenters, butchers), and some shopkeepers, merchants, inn-keepers, shippers, civil servants and a miller, reverend, schoolmaster and so on were living in each parish. In the much specialised economy of the Groningen coastal countryside – like in other parts of the Dutch coastal region – these non-

agrarian households were solely supplying products and services to the farmsteads and the local inhabitants (Paping 1995). The large majority of this group did not have any land at its disposal. The regional export was restricted to agricultural products (grain, oil seed, meal, butter, cows, sheep) and the aim of farmers was to produce as much as possible for the market (also to pay the artisans and numerous agrarian wage workers). The importance of self-provision on the farms was rather restricted, and some of the food consumed (rye bread, meal, but also colonial food ingredients) even was bought.

In comparison, the occupational structure in Westphalian villages seems to be less clearly differentiated, mainly because many products for daily needs were still produced on the farm. For example, poor families usually benefited from the baking days at one of the farms, bringing their dough to one of the peasants' bake houses. Many non-peasant families had numerous sources of income, combining handicraft with agricultural day labouring (Pfister e.a. 2015).. To sum up, the specialization of non-peasant households was less developed in Westphalia than in the Groningen area

### Land rights and land market

The two regions studied resembled with regard to land rights, but they differed largely when the land market is concerned. In both regions freehold farming was nearly completely absent. In Westphalia, peasants held their farms within quite different systems of legal rights. Until the Napoleonic period peasants usually were subjects of personal dominion, meaning that they had certain personal obligations towards their lord, and were not free to go. These relations ended in the beginning of nineteenth century, but the lords' rights towards the land remained in effect for many years (Bracht 2013). The systems of manorial and property rights not only differed between, but also within regions. Sometimes noblemen owned the farms, and the peasants had only the right to use farm and land ('*Kolonatsrecht*'). In other cases both noblemen and peasants were co-owners of the real property, with lords having the so called '*Ober-eigentum*' ('*dominium directum*') and peasants the '*Nutzeigentum*' ('*dominium utile*'). In general property rights were quite good. Peasants bequeathed their farms to their heirs, or handed it down, and the noblemen had little means to expel a peasant family from a farm. The land, however, was firmly attached to the farm, so it could not be sold separately, at least not without the (noble) owner's agreement, just like in Groningen.

In Groningen, the land was rented out by lords, urban patricians, local institutions, the provincial government and some wealthy countrymen, though in a rather peculiar way, resulting ultimately in the land users obtaining extremely strong property rights. Rented land was formally connected ('*beklemd*') to a specific farmstead, while the quite expensive building itself was owned by the farmer family. Most land owners and farmers in the second half of the eighteenth century concluded contracts that stipulated that the right to use the land could be sold or inherited in anyway the farmer liked. In return for this guarantee land users paid considerable sums of money to the owners and promised to pay the fixed money rent eternally. With the rise in agrarian prices at the end of the eighteenth century, these agreements made land users the actual owners of the land at the expense of the old formal land owners (Knottnerus 2004). The tenants, however, did not receive the right to disconnect the land from the farmstead, making it hard to split farms into smaller pieces. Remarkably, for ordinary houses the same system existed. Usually the inhabitants owned the building, while they rented the piece of land on which it was erected for a fixed money rent from a local institution, no-

blemen or rich villager. These strong property rights were quite efficient, stimulating the users to maintain their houses well as these were really their own. Another advantage was that families needed to have less money to own a house or farmstead, as part of the value was in a sense in this system automatically borrowed from the land owner for a fixed annual sum.

In Westphalia, there was no (legal) land market in the eighteenth century. In the course of the nineteenth century legal obstructions to sell land for reasons of manorial rights vanished slowly (Fertig 2007; 2013). But even if peasants were allowed to sell farm land, they did not make much use of this possibility in some regions as will be shown later on. During the early nineteenth century, rents were still paid in kind, resulting in a much weaker dependence on the market, although the Prussian administration made some efforts to have rents converted to fixed rents or even abolished. Only in Löhne some peasants activated conversion before the 1830s, and here one of the lords insisted on conversion of many rents between 1832 and 1847. In this village, half of all rents had been fixed until 1850, and two out of three had been abolished (including rents that had been converted before). This means that 35% of the rents were still paid in kind in 1850. In Borgeln neither peasants nor lords had been too interested in touching the traditional rent system. The process started only in the 1840s, when a number of peasants had their rents converted into fixed rents. In 1850, 13% of all rents had been abolished, 35% (recently) converted into fixed rents, and 52% were still rents in kind. The Prussian administration enabled peasants and lords to fix or even abolish rents after the Napoleonic period, but both parties were not very interested during the first half of nineteenth century. Only after 1850, when legislation improved the conditions for peasants, most of the rents were abolished within a few years (Bracht 2013).

### Marriage law and inheritance rights

#### 1) Joint marital property

Houses and land were the most important economic assets in both regions and property rights were very well protected. Spouses were usually joint owners of real estates, unless in the marriage contract different provisions were made. When one of the spouses died, the surviving parents usually kept control of the whole inheritance, although legally the children possessed half of it. In Borgeln, men and women had slightly differing rights: After the death of one partner, a widower got 50% of the fortune, a widow only 33%. Nonetheless, the widowed parent usually went on managing the farm, including the children's share. In Groningen, there were some exceptions to this rule: An unequal division of property happened only when a very large socio-economic difference between the families of bride and groom existed. Also land in full property – what was quite rare among non-nobles – remained owned by the marriage partner who brought it in or inherited it.

#### 2) Widowed parent

After being widowed, the survivor in Groningen was legally entitled to do what he or she liked as *legitimus tutor* / *legitima tutrix* of his / her children below the age of about 25. In case of remarriage, the survivor was obliged to pay out half the value of the joint possessions as the inheritance of the deceased when the children became 18, or at least at that time (s)he had to pay interest to the children. Upon remarriage an inventory was made up to calculate the exact money value of the whole inheritance. Every possession was valued including cloths, chairs and beds and also all the debts of the household were stated. Several appointed guardi-

ans had to take care that the rights of the children were not violated by the new marriage. In practise, without a remarriage, the children lend their part of the maternal or paternal inheritance nearly always back to the surviving parent, and the inheritance was often only divided upon the death of the last spouse. If the parents or the surviving parent for one reason or another were very liquid, parts of the inheritance could already be paid out earlier, or a dowry could be given to the children.

As in Groningen, the rights of Westphalian children were highly secured in cases where the surviving parent married again, by establishing an inventory and authorizing a guardian to take care of the children's rights. This way the children's inheritance had to be paid later, mostly when they turned 24 and reached majority. In most cases, the widow or widower handed over the farm or the house as soon as the designated successor was in a good position to take over. Then all family members set up a contract, and mother or father and all siblings assigned their share of the family fortune to the main heir. In return, the parents got a pension and the siblings compensation payments. These inheritance payments for siblings were quite high in the nineteenth century, making them attractive marriage partners in comparison to children of poor families. So even if the legislation differed, there was almost no difference in inheritance practice.

### 3) Inheritance rights

Old medieval Groningen laws contained regulations which ordered that sons should inherit twice as much of the real estates than daughters. However, about all the marriage contracts (with the exception of the ones of nobles) and wills mentioned that daughters and sons should be treated exactly similar. In the second half of the eighteenth century something between a quarter and a half of the couples, mostly the more wealthy ones, concluded a marriage contract a few weeks before the marriage date, which often was also signed by a lot of near family members (parents, brothers, sisters and so on). However, even in the case there was no marriage contract, sons and daughters received the same part of the paternal inheritance, and surviving parents were entitled to half the value of the joint possessions. By the time the paternal inheritance was divided, all these transfers and dowries were taken into account to establish to how much money each child was entitled. Also sometimes upon division, it was assumed that those children staying at home after the age of 18 were entitled to annual money wages (sons more than daughters) as they replaced live-in farmhands and maids who else had to be hired, considering these wages to be a liability of the inheritance. Who of the children received the house or farmstead did not pay any role in the division. The money value of the house or farmstead was calculated and considered to be part of the inheritance. Because of this, a succeeding child usually had to pay considerable sums to his or her siblings to obtain the paternal property.

In Westphalian inheritance customs, all children with exception of the farm successor were treated equal, with women and men getting the same amount of inheritance payment. Farm successors maintained the farm and with it a lot of obligations towards parents and siblings, whereas all siblings received similar inheritance compensations in kind or in cash (Lünemann 2006). In many cases the transfer of the farm was closely connected to the marriage of the farm successor in Westphalia. There are two main reasons for this connection: First, the farm successor needed resources to pay out the large inheritance payments of his or her siblings, and often was depending on the marriage partner's inheritance. Second, the in-marrying



partner wanted to be sure that his or her spouse would be the farm successor, and the farm would not be given to another sibling eventually. The absence of a market for farms in Westphalia signified that inheritance constituted the almost exclusive access to farm ownership. This is a fundamental difference to the inheritance practise in Groningen, where farms were often sold on the market and children could for example invest their inheritance payment to buy a farm, or use the expectation of receiving it to borrow money for this aim.

## **2.b. Households of farmers, day labourers and non-agrarian families**

The farm house was a place to work and live, where the production and consumption of the members of the family took place. In this respect, it has to be taken into account that in both Westphalia and Groningen rural households were frequently extended, either by close relatives or servants and other non-family members. In this section, we will show that we need to distinguish between three distinct rural groups: farmers, landless or land-poor labourers, and others, for the most part craftsmen. For all three groups the house was a place of consumption and recovery, but not necessarily the location for productive work.

### Peasant farms

Farms could have very different sizes both in Groningen and in Westphalia. In Westphalia, holdings larger than 1 ha can be considered as farms, smaller holdings as land-poor households. However, in Groningen the dividing line is usually put at 5 ha, as with less land it was difficult to sustain a household without alternative non-agrarian sources of income. Consequently, those using 1-5 ha often were craftsmen and merchants, and not agricultural smallholders (Paping 1995). Within Westphalia, we also observe substantial differences. In 1830, farms in Borgeln (Soester Börde) made up for 43% of all holdings with land. The farms were larger in this region than in Eastern Westphalia, more than every second farm had more than 10 ha, about a quarter was larger than 20 ha. The largest farm had 59 ha, of which 35 ha were arable land, 21 ha wood land, 1.5 ha meadow and 1.3 ha farmyard and garden. In Löhne, however, 60% of all holdings were larger than 1 ha, but most of them were rather small. Just about one out of ten farms had more than 10 ha, and the largest farm had only 25 ha of land. On this farm, 17.2 ha were arable land, 2.9 ha wood land, 2.0 ha heathland and 2.1 ha meadow. The farmyard including the garden made for another 0.7 ha.

The difference in land holding between Westphalian parishes and Groningen, however, was larger. More than 80% of all holdings in the Marne were larger than 1 ha, and at the same time 40% of those households had at least 10 ha, but not rarely more than 40 ha at its disposal. In Groningen statistics we find a majority of households with no land reported: in 1862 roughly 66% in the Marne – mainly landless farm labourers, but also petty artisans and others working outside agriculture. This group had at best only a small garden around the house at disposal. We already pointed at the system of fixed tenures which made it very difficult to acquire small pieces of land. Also not very helpful in this respect was that in the Groningen Marne all land was already cultivated, partly as arable land, partly as grassland.

Table 2: Land size of farms and small holdings in Groningen and Westphalia.

	Groningen 1862		Westphalia 1866			
	Marne		Löhne		Borgeln	
Households	N		N		N	
< 1 ha	94	(18.6%)	54	(35.5%)	78	(50.0%)
1-5 ha	137	(27.1%)	40	(26.3%)	23	(14.7%)
5-10 ha	56	(11.1%)	34	(22.4%)	14	(9.0%)
10-20 ha	69	(13.7%)	23	(15.1%)	20	(12.8%)
20-40 ha	97	(19.2%)	1	(0.7%)	14	(9.0%)
40+ ha	52	(10.3%)	0	(0.0%)	7	(4.5%)
Households with land	505	(100.0%)	152	(100.0%)	156	(100.0%)
Households without land (estimated)	C. 1,056		C. 160		C. 116	
Total (estimated)	C. 1,561		C. 212		C. 272	

Source: Bijdragen (1870); Fertig (2007); Land title registers and cadastre Löhne and Borgeln, own calculations. The number of households without land was roughly estimated, taking into account population-size and estimated average household-size.

### Servants

Many of the large farmers and their families in both Groningen and Westphalia could not only live from their agricultural production, but they even had to fall back on hiring additional labour. Although the farmer, his wife, the older sons and daughters and other relatives living in the household performed as much farm work as possible, this was often not enough to get all the work done. Farm size, ecotype and farmer family size together determined the number of servants and day labourers that had to be employed to take the most benefit of the land.

In both regions, we observe a broad range of socio-economic systems to hire waged farm labour. In general, we can distinguish between the integration of farmhands into the peasant's household, and sporadic or more or less continuous hiring of day labourers living in a different household. Most of the larger farmers in Groningen employed unmarried live-in farm maids and hands, which number diverged from one to sometimes six or more (Paping 2005). These live-in servants were usually interchangeable with the sons and daughters of the farmer, as they performed the same kind of work on the farm and also in the household proper. The fewer grown-up daughters were at home, the more maids were hired, and also the fewer grown-up sons, the more farmhands could be found on a farm (Van Nederveen Meerkerk & Paping 2014). Live-in farm servants of 15 year and older formed in total in the Marne 23% of the population above 15 year active in agriculture in 1862 (Bijdragen 1870).

In Westphalia, we see a similar system in Borgeln. About 34% of all adults living in the village worked and lived as unmarried servants on peasant farms, including many young people who had temporarily migrated to the countryside attracted by the possibility of earning relatively high incomes. Farm servants stayed on the farm, and had usually annual contracts. The maidservants mostly lived with the family, the farmhands in chambers above the cow-sheds and horse stables. In the 1820s, during the establishment of the first Prussian cadastral

survey (*cataster*), all communities had been visited by state officials, and their economic status recorded by officials. For Borgeln they stated that they found at least one ‘boy’, one groom and one maid on every farm. On middle-sized farms (in their opinion, 10–22 ha) they found two grooms, one farmhand, one boy, and two maidservants, and on large farms even three grooms and three maidservants instead of two. So the visitors saw at least three servants on peasant farms of more than 10 ha, up to eight servants on large farms.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, we find very few servants in Eastern Westphalian Löhne, making up for only about 3 percent of the adult population. There was only one maid on a small farm, and even on the few larger farms (which were much smaller than in Borgeln, however), they found only four or five servants. Altogether, servants were a rather small group in this region.<sup>3</sup>

Both in Groningen and Westphalia farmer families and servants shared their meals until well into the nineteenth century, when the habit of sitting together on the same table started to dissolve. At the same time, farmer families started to separate their living space from their servants and also from the stables of their cattle (Sauermann 1978). Unfortunately, we don’t have any household lists for this period for our Westphalian villages, but there is evidence that peasants kept their offspring rather on the farm, than having them working for other peasants. So most of the servants either were children of the many day labourer families in the village, just like in Groningen where nearly all live-in farm personnel were recruited from the landless farm labourer families, or they had migrated from other places.

### Day labourers

For both rural societies in Westphalia and Groningen the importance of outside-the-household labourers has to be stressed. Next to the farmer family and the servants living in the household a considerable amount of the farm work was done by members of agricultural labourers families who were not part of the farmer household, but had a household of their own. Both in Groningen and the central Westphalian place (Borgeln) we found that many families had no landed property at all (table 2). Consequently, there was a very large supply of male and female labour on the local farm labour market. In Eastern Westphalian Löhne many landless families lived by a mixture of yarn spinning and day labouring, and they were closely attached to farms through a special system combining renting some living space, working obligations and social support in times of need. In this section we will take a closer look at these non-peasant families living from either or both agricultural wage work and protoindustrial work.

Houses of Groningen landless labourers were only tiny, only having the function of a place to live, but they were proper houses, built of stone and the cheaper ones sometimes partly of lime. Only a few labourer houses in the Eastern Marne were situated near a specific farm, while most of them were concentrated in villages or small hamlets. So Groningen labourer houses and households were clearly separated from the farmsteads on which the family members found work. Labourer families cultivated some food (vegetables and potatoes) in their tiny gardens (usually around 0.05 ha), and some rented a small potato field. They usually did not own any livestock and were nearly wholly depending on wage work for their living.

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<sup>2</sup> Wertschätzungsprotokolle 1828.

<sup>3</sup> Wertschätzungsprotokolle Mennighüffen 1824/26.

Although we do not have precise figures, the majority of the adult and usually married labourers worked casually for one or more farms, and did not have work during part of the winter. As the food situation in the labourer households was very bad, and farmers were not inclined to hire juvenile labourers on a daily basis, there was a strong incentive to remove teenage daughters and sons from the labourer house as fast as possible through the lifecycle servant system with annual contracts. Consequently, labourer households were on average very small with 3.9 members (N=1076), compared to the 6.8 members found in farmer households (N=537).<sup>4</sup>

In Westphalia there were a broad range of different agreements between farmers and landless families. In some parts, as Eastern Westphalia, the landless were very closely attached to a specific farm, encompassing manifold relations between peasants and these landless families. In other parts, as in Borgeln, farmers took unmarried servants in to husband their large farms and had, in addition, rather loose relations to day labourers, a system at first sight rather similar to that in Groningen, though with regard to living places of these day labourers there were large differences. Later we will look more closely at the quite peculiar Eastern Westphalian '*Heuerling*' system, found in those parts of north-western Germany where proto-industrial production of yarn and linen formed a large part of economic activities from at least the middle of eighteenth century onwards, but here we will focus on day labourers.

In the central Westphalian parish Borgeln many families made a living by day labouring and had no landed property at all. It is pretty clear that they lived as tenants on the farms, but since even the priest did not register the current address, we face an almost complete lack of sources about their whereabouts, in contrast with Groningen, where we can establish exactly where each labourer family lived. People around Borgeln remember that there have been people living in barns, or in small baking houses placed apart from the main farm house. But where these families lived, how long they stayed in one place, and how their individual relations with peasants were shaped remains unclear. However, the lack of kinship and godparent relations between peasants and day labourers hints at very loose and distant relations in Borgeln, whereas peasants and non-peasants shared the same social networks in Eastern Westphalian Löhne (Fertig 2012). Next to these landless labourers, many of the non-peasant families in central Westphalia were owners of small houses (somewhat comparable with Groningen), but also of small plots of land. These families often lived from day labouring, though this group of smallholders also comprised artisans and shop-keepers. Like in Groningen, servanthood was a normal stage in the lifecycle of the children of Westphalian landless labourers from about the age of 14 until they married, making a wage career hopping from one farm to the other. After marriage the former servants usually established a household of their own, joining the labour force of day labourers.

The rise in population resulted in an increasing share of the landless or near landless households in both Westphalia and Groningen. Figures for the whole of the Groningen clay region show for instance an increase from 27.4% of the labourer households around 1780 to

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<sup>4</sup> Calculated from census lists of 1829 and 1850 of several municipalities in the Groningen clay region, including Leens in the Marne in 1829.

39.5% around 1850 (Paping 1995). This development was made possible by a sharp increase of arable land from 47% in 1807 to 77% in 1862 in the Marne (calculated from Priester 1991). As arable land demanded more labour, and in general agriculture became more labour intensive, there was usually enough work to do on the large farms for the rapidly increasing group of landless farm labourers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Numerous new dwellings must have been built to house this increasing agricultural working class. For Groningen we know that only some of these new houses were positioned near the large farms that were usually situated outside the villages, and most of them were built in the villages. Although two-third of the labourer households in Groningen owned their house around 1800 (66% in a sample of 213 between 1770/1810 and 69% in a sample of 562 1806/1814) this diminished during the next half a century to only 37% in 1862 (statistical information on 7,182 households in the Groningen clay region: Paping 1995).

### Non-agrarian households

In the Westphalian parishes there was also a group of households making primarily a living outside agriculture, but this group was more limited than in the Groningen countryside where they formed about 40% of the households (compare table 1). The combination of non-agricultural work with small scale agricultural activities seemed to have been more important in Westphalia than in more specialised Groningen, though in the last region the most well-to-do of these households often also had the user right of substantial stretches of land, usually between 1 and 5 ha (table 2).

Differences within the non-agricultural group in Groningen were large, as some of these households were wealthy, while others were poor. Wealth was usually depending on the investments necessary to perform the specific job, either in physical or human capital (think of school masters, reverends and physicians). A miller was relatively rich as the mill is expensive; for a smithy, bakery, inn or shop, a larger building to live in was needed, while also money had to be invested in for instance merchandise or equipment. Living space and workshop were joined in one house in which production and consumption both took place. However, for tailors, shoemakers (not having a tannery), carpenters and pedlars the size of the house was far less important, as their work did not demand much space and specific installations. As the investments for these jobs were low, these households were usually the least well-off from those active outside agriculture (Paping 2010).

A condition for wife and children to help was of course also that the business at home offered enough work for everybody. In some cases the small size of this business combined with economic necessities forced children to leave the household to go and work elsewhere. Sons left to become for instance an apprentice of an artisan in another household and build up human capital, while daughters found a living as a maid. For a few occupations, sons had to leave the parental households to go to a secondary school or university. Those non-agriculture households with a higher demand for than supply of labour, on the other hand, hired extra (usually live-in) personnel as maids in an inn or shop and apprentices in a smithy or bakery. Nearby cities also offered a lot of opportunities for rural juveniles to find work and learn for other occupations than was possible in the paternal home. However, this move to the cities only really took-off in the second half of the nineteenth century in both Westphalia and Groningen fuelling industrialisation and urbanisation.

To conclude, the paternal house offered for the children in the non-agricultural households often the opportunity to learn the parental trade. However, this was also a limitation of staying at home as those children's possibilities were nearly completely restricted to this parental trade, due to the prevailing lifecycle servant system within crafts. Consequently, many children in such households left the paternal house in their teenage years to build up a career elsewhere. As a result the household-size of rural families having a non-agricultural business was – at least in Groningen with 4.9 (N=1145) – larger than of labourers, but much smaller than of farmers.

### **3. Family attachment to the house/farm**

In the previous section we discussed that the house formed to a diverging extent the backbone of the rural household economy. It was especially extremely important for farmers, a large part of the non-agricultural households and in a rather specific way as we will see for *Heueringe*, while less so for farm labourers and the rest of the non-agricultural households whose economic activities were often less related to the house itself. In this section we want to investigate the form and degree of the actual attachment between families and their houses/farmsteads as both their most valuable assets and the basis of their family economy. For this actual attachment we will study at first the way of transferring farmsteads and after that also of non-peasant houses without extensive landed property to a new owner or principal user by looking at the changes in the heads of households living in specific buildings.

#### **3.a. Peasants and their farms**

Our present research confirms that – also in accordance with the research of Schlumbohm (1994) on Belm – Westphalian peasant families in both villages showed a very strong interest in keeping farms within the family, and consequently the whole farm transfer system was directed towards this goal. Including remarriages, in Löhne 13% of the farms with more than 5 ha were transferred to non-relatives, while in Borgeln this happened even only in 7% of the cases. This is in sharp contrast with the 52% of transfers in the Groningen Eastern Marne, where new inhabitants were not related to previous farmers, including the cases that the building was not used as a farmstead anymore. From these, in 8% of the cases the farmstead was disbanded, which in this period usually did not mean that the building was torn down, but that the land was disconnected from the farm and came in use of one or more other farms. In Westphalia on the other hand, this happened very seldom, and only in cases of bankruptcies of farmers, that were rare due to the weaker connection to the market of the households. If you sell all your produce on the market as in Groningen, you are much more depending on that market, than if you have partly subsistence agriculture with a surplus for the market. In the first case failing as a farmer means bankruptcy, in the second less to eat on the farm.

For the Westphalian case there are only a few examples where farms got into the hands of non-family. The much lower turnover rate at the land market in Borgeln (table 3) was caused by the complete lack of bankruptcies in this wealthy region, and the widespread reluctance to sell any land at all. In Groningen, on the other hand, very wealthy farmer fami-

lies sometimes managed two farms for some time, with in one a labourer household or only live-in servants. In several of the 5% cases that the farm was rented out on loose terms (usually six year contracts),<sup>5</sup> family members later on returned to the farmstead.

*Table 3. Distribution of recipients of transferred farms in the Eastern Marne (Groningen, 1750–1860) and Löhne and Borgeln (Westphalia, 1750–1860).*

	Eastern Marne		Löhne		Borgeln	
	5-30 ha	30+ ha	1-5 ha	5+ ha	1-5 ha	5+ ha
Son	12.5%	29.8%	46.5%	49.2%	44.7%	55.9%
Daughter	8.4%	9.6%	14.9%	13.3%	28.9%	15.2%
Other near relatives	7.4%	8.5%	11.4%	9.9%	10.5%	12.8%
<b>Total relatives</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>47.9%</b>	<b>72.8%</b>	<b>72.4%</b>	<b>84.2%</b>	<b>83.9%</b>
<b>Widow re-marrying</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
Unrelated new farmers	49.9%	33.8%	19.3%	13.3%	5.3%	7.1%
Empty / labourers / disappeared	10.5%	5.1%	-	-	-	-
<b>Total non-family</b>	<b>60.4%</b>	<b>38.9%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>211</b>

\*Note: Westphalian figures include all cousins, nephews and nieces, uncles and aunts, as well as their marriage partners, while in Groningen these were only taking into account when there were no heirs or adult heirs, or if the successors themselves were descending from the farm. The non-family category comprises distant relatives and people without observable relationship.<sup>6</sup>

However, leaving all these kind of diffuse cases out of the analysis, still in a staggering 40% of all farm transfers in Groningen, it was sold to strangers to move out of family hands completely. This high percentage suggests a much lower attachment of the farmer family to a specific farm than in Westphalia. Of course the extent of transfers of farmsteads, and especially the sales to non-relatives must have been related to the size of the land market in a region. However, the causal direction is on first sight not clear. Did a large land market result in a smaller attachment of families to farmsteads, or was it this limited attachment that caused a large market to develop? Clearly, the way property rights of land were organised must have greatly influenced the development of a land market.

Before 1750, the land market in Groningen was nearly completely restricted to the ownership rights of the land in the hands of lords, patricians and rich countrymen. The rights

<sup>5</sup> Table 3: 11 of the 391 cases for 5-30 ha farms and 5 out of the 272 cases for 30+ ha farms were rented out to unrelated households.

<sup>6</sup> The Groningen figures relate to transfers in the Eastern Marne parishes of Kloosterburen, Leens, Vliedorp Warhuizen, Wehe, Wierhuizen and Zuurdijk. See also Paping 2012; Paping & Karel 2011, for the use of a smaller version of the database. Empty means that the farm was without a farmer family household for at least five years. For Westphalia, the databases for the parish of Löhne and Borgeln cover family reconstitution data, combined with information on landed property from land title registers and cadastral surveys.

to use the land were yet of limited value; in the seventeenth century because of the flexible rents, and in the first half of the eighteenth century due to low agricultural prices. Nevertheless, already by that time there was a considerable market for farm buildings as such, to which as argued land user rights were connected. Research shows that already in the seventeenth century about half of the new inhabitants of farmsteads were unrelated to the former ones (Paping 2012). Whereas previously buildings were sold, in the second half of the eighteenth century the selling contracts always mentioned the sale of the farm building with the right to use the land. In 1756 a farm in Zuurdijk with the right to use 11 ha for 66 guilders and 3 dimes rent annually was bought by a farmer couple for only 580 guilders (being hardly the price of the building), while the farmer widow sold the same farm in 1782 with improved user rights and the same rent for a threefold 1,905 guilders.<sup>7</sup> Around 1800 such a farm would have a market value of about 4,000 guilders and around 1850 about 6,000 guilders (roughly estimated from Paping 1995, p. 353-354). As the farmers were the owners of these buildings, they could sell them to the highest bidder. Already in the seventeenth century the formal owners usually complied by accepting the buyer as the new tenant of the land, and in the course of the eighteenth century they lost their formal influence completely. In this way, an already flourishing market for farm buildings developed in a proper land market in the second half of the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, we do not have exact figures about the amount of (user rights of) land sold to non-relatives, but it might have been 2 to 3% annually, taking into account the figures of table 3.

In Westphalia, the situation was completely different. Institutional and legal barriers, especially the large influence of noble land owners on the tenancy, made it difficult for a proper market in rights to use the land to develop, although it seems that this has changed to some extent in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The amount of traded land per year in Löhne was about 2.2% between 1830 and 1866; however, only 1.4% of the land was sold outside the family. In Borgeln, the amount was even much smaller. Here 0.7% of the land was sold, 0.6% outside the family. Mostly either a complete farm changed hands – although this happened very seldom – or peasants supplemented their farm with an additional piece of land. Some parcels were also used to build new houses for land-poor households, but not for new farms (Fertig 2004, 2007). It is safe to state that in general the Westphalian land market was small, and farms were sold only for reasons of bankruptcy of the peasant household or the family's emigration overseas. This situation is reflected in the extremely low share of strangers taking over farmsteads in Borgeln, and to a slightly lesser extent in Löhne, that at least had some land market (table 3).

The higher percentages of succession were made possible by a succession system of farmsteads in Westphalia wholly directed towards handing the farm over to the next generation. Usually a child would take over the farm when the situation of the family – for instance the health situation of the old parents or marriage plans of the younger generation – called for clarification of mutual rights and obligations. If we look only at the cases where the farm had been transferred to a child, we can distinguish clearly between peasant and smallholder's successions. In general, sons had better chances to take over the farm than daughters. In Borgeln we observe a clear picture: On full farms, only one out of five transfers favoured a daughter.

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<sup>7</sup> Groningen Archives, 734-343, fol. 73v; 734-839, fol. 46.



On very small farms and non-peasant houses, however, we find much more succeeding daughters, about 40% of these farms and houses had female successors. In Löhne, we find a similar picture: only one out of five farms beyond 5 ha went into the hand of a daughter, but one out of four smaller farms. So as a rule we can say that sons were favoured over daughters, but this attitude was much stronger on larger farms.

Sometimes widows and widowers married again, especially if they lost their partner rather early. If this resulted in new off-spring, it was not always beforehand clear if the farm would be handed over to a child from the first or the second marriage. Traditionally, it should be a son from the first marriage, but in practice people sometimes made daughters their successor or a child from a second marriage. In the eighteenth century, men often could only marry onto a farm as so-called '*Interimswirt*', a 'peasant-in-between'. After a clearly defined period of time, the new husband and the widow had to hand the farm to the *Anerbe*, the designated heir. In most cases, the farm was transferred when the young man – or in some cases the young woman – reached adulthood. The older couple moved to a separate part of the farm, as pensioners. In other cases widowed peasants decided to keep the farm as single owners for quite a long period. While single parents with small children usually married again fast, there is a considerable difference between widows and widowers with older children. Whereas widowers tended to hand over the farm after a short period, widows often kept the management and the property rights for a long time. It seems to have been easier to substitute the peasant by an adolescent son than to have a daughter keep house. What is more, it was often more important for widows to secure their position on the farm by keeping the property rights as long as possible. We observed the other side of the coin in contracts established by widows: they were often worried about their well-being, and tried to guard themselves against potential problems as good as possible (Fertig, Lünemann & Fertig 2005).

In many cases the question of succession was kept open when a surviving parent remarried. This wasn't a problem as long as the inheritance rights of the children were secured in any way. In many farm transfer contracts families motivate the timing of the transfer either with feebleness or illness of the older generation, or with marriage plans of the farm successor. A major goal of these contracts was the balance of interests between the young and the old generation, and also between farm successor and his or her siblings, who received their inheritance payments. In principle, every child could become successor, as long as he or she was able to perform the tasks of a farm owner and was able to satisfy the needs of the other family members, although the traditional *Anerbe* in Löhne was the youngest and in Borgeln the oldest son. In both Westphalian villages, almost half of all farm successors were already married when they took over the farm. As far as we know from the contracts, those couples already lived and worked on the farm before they became regular farm owners. They had worked under the control of the old generation for months or even years before they attained property rights and economic independence.

The situation in Groningen was completely different, with farms passing rather easily to non-relatives. There are a lot of reasons for this. Firstly, many children in this nuclear-family region were already married and had settled on a farm of their own when the farm was freed due to the death, or less often the retirement of the last parent. This made succession on the parental farm rather unattractive, though some children really returned. Secondly, it might have been easier to sell the farm in case of retirement or division of the inheritance, as the sale made the money immediately available. Thirdly, quite a lot of farmers were not able to sur-

vive financially as farmers – in this market-oriented economy quite a risky business, due to the changing grain prices – making it necessary to have both agricultural skills (getting a high production) and economic skills (getting good prices) to earn enough to pay the high and largely inevitable annual costs, including mortgage interest, taxes, and rewards of labourers and artisans. Consequently, sometimes farmers really went bankrupt, or else were forced by creditors to sell the farm, ending up as farm labourers or in the best case as shop- or inn-keepers (Paping & Karel 2011).

The difference between large farms and small farms in the eastern Marne in table 3 might also indicate that there could have been a preference for family succession of the farmstead, but that many families with smaller farmsteads could not afford such a strategy. The families on very large farms were usually wealthy, making it easier to establish that a child, especially a son, would be the next farmer on the farmstead. Only a quarter of these farms went to a daughter, while for farms between 5 and 30 hectare this was about 40%. The figures suggest that an ideal of having a farm where the son will take over the business in the end might have existed. There was, however, a large difference between theory and practise. In actual situations the farmer family decided for the most practical and sometimes only affordable solution, which was often to sell the farm to strangers.

### **3.b. labourers**

We have already seen that in Groningen in the second half of the eighteenth century at least two thirds of the labourer households owned their house, while in 1862 this share had fallen to only 37%, though the absolute number of houses had increased considerably. In the parish of Kloosterburen the amount of houses rose from 75-80 around 1760, to 120 in 1806, and 148 in 1850. If we deduct the farmsteads (over 5 hectare of land use), the development was 49-55 houses around 1760, 89 houses in 1806 and 119 in 1850. Although this increase looks impressive, it was from 1806 onwards far below the growth of the working class and non-agricultural population. From a census list from Kloosterburen in 1812 we know that in hardly any house more than one nuclear unit lived, with the exception only of the poorhouse and a few often very temporary three-generation households. The rule was that in every house one family lived. The population registers of 1850 show this to have been changed in less than half a century. At that time 25 out of 119 ordinary houses besides the poor house inhabited two or sometimes even three unrelated households.

But even ownership of houses did not create enormous stability, because these houses were also sold quite often. Nevertheless, the difference with rented houses was large. Especially a lot of farm labourers, but also petty artisans were moving continuously around in the village, from one rented house to the other, comparable to the Westphalian *Heuerlinge* families. Next to this, a lot of land poor Groningen families migrated one or more times to other villages in the neighbourhood. The Kloosterburen data show that only a very limited part of both the labourer, artisan and shopkeepers families lived in the same house for more generations. Family succession was even very rare as table 4 shows, and the contrast with the farmers is large. Where for farmers the option of handing the house over to a family was – though not the rule – a quite usual strategy, for the other rural inhabitants of Groningen it was very exceptional, notwithstanding that the transfer procedure of houses was completely identical to that of farmsteads.

Table 4: Distribution of recipients of transferred houses in Kloosterburen (Groningen, 1750–1850) and Löhne and Borgeln (Westphalia, 1750-1860).<sup>8</sup>

	Kloosterb. Labourers	Kloosterb. Non-agrar. Households	Löhne	Borgeln
Son	9.0%	8.4%	30.8%	36.4%
Daughter	8.4%	1.2%	17.9%	26.4%
Other near relatives	8.4%	4.8%	12.8%	10.9%
<b>Total relatives</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>61.5%</b>	<b>73.6%</b>
<b>Widow remarrying</b>	<b>3.69%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
<b>Unrelated new house-owners</b>	<b>70.1%</b>	<b>76.0%</b>	<b>35.9%</b>	<b>20.2%</b>
<b>House broken down</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>258</b>

Source: the figures for both Kloosterburen<sup>9</sup> and Löhne and Borgeln<sup>10</sup> are based on a reconstruction of the history of ownership and inhabitants of buildings.

In Westphalia, on the other hand, families who managed to get a house tried to keep it within the family, and there was in many cases a relative willing to take over. Within land-poor house-owning families, daughters had better chances to receive the parents' property: one third of the houses passed to children ended up in the hands of a daughter in Löhne, and even 40% in Borgeln, where family attachment to peasant farms was strongest (see above). In this village only every fifth of all the transfers went into the hand of a person outside the family. In Löhne this share was much higher; one out of three houses went into the hand of an unrelated person. Two factors might help to understand the differences. First, the attachment of families to farms is also less strong in this region (see table 3). Second, non-peasant families mostly lived as *Heuerlinge* in rented houses, closely connected to a farmstead. So the normal case was to rent a house on a farm for a couple of years and then move to another farm. Only

<sup>8</sup> When interpreting the data from table 4, it has to be taken into account that they mostly relate to the first half of the nineteenth century. High population growth on the one hand and the rising share of the non-farming part of the households resulted in both Westphalia and Groningen in a very large rise in the number of ordinary houses during the period 1750-1850, as numerous ones were being built.

<sup>9</sup> Kloosterburen data until 1806 are the result of combining sales contracts with several lists and a wide range of other sources, including baptism and marriage registers similar to that of farms. The later period has been constructed using lists with inhabitants (some supplying only heads of households) and house numbers existing for 1806, 1812, 1826, 1838 and 1850, taxation lists for 1809-1814, 1816, 1819, 1826 and 1830 partly giving owners. In the birth and death certificates in civil registration from 1811 to 1847 usually house numbers are mentioned, though with some mistakes. Family relations were established using the digitalised dataset of births, marriages and deaths for the province of Groningen ([allegroningen.nl](http://allegroningen.nl)).

<sup>10</sup> For the two Westphalian parishes of Borgeln and Löhne data have been collected and linked in separate databases. Core of the databases are family reconstitutions, amended by land title registers (*Hypothekenbücher*, established during the 1820s), cadastre (complete lists for 1830 and 1866, documentation of modification on each year), farm transfer (and other family) contracts and records about manorial rights. From these sources we have information on vital events, family and kinship, godparents, landed property, land sales, credit, rights of lords, retirement contracts, inheritance payments, and other matters. All data are linked by nominal, non-automatic record linkage (see G. Fertig 2007 for a detailed discussion).

few landless families owned houses, as this was not the usual way to establish a household in this region. Nonetheless those few families tried to keep the house and to hand it over to the next generation.

The upturn of proto-industrial production in north-western Germany enabled many young people to establish a new household, especially in regions where opportunities in agriculture were limited for landless couples. Spinning yarn and weaving linen was a viable basis to make a living for a young family, usually in combination with occasional agricultural work. Although there is little research on how widespread this so called *Heuerling* system was, there is evidence that it was an important part of the social structure in Löhne as in many north-western German regions (Schlumbohm 1994; Escher 1984; Könenkamp 1997; Seraphim 1947; Wrasmann, 1919, 1921). A *Heuerling* family usually rented a house, or part of a house, placed not far from the peasant farm. The proximity to the farm house was crucial, because the obligation to work on demand was an important component of the tenancy. Peasants called or whistled when they needed labourers, and every member of the family who was capable of work was expected to be on the spot. In this sense the *Heuerling* family was not part of the peasant's household, but nonetheless closely connected to the peasant farm. The rent had at least in part to be paid by agricultural work, but the lion's share of household income was achieved by spinning and weaving. Since most houses also had gardens and even small pieces of arable land, the families could complement their income as part of a kind of subsistence economy. In this sense, the income of the landless was based on these three components, and part of a special system of houses-beyond-the-farm.

Since *Heuerling* families had no landed property, information on their whereabouts is rather scarce. Due to the fact that bonds between peasants and their tenants were relatively strong, the priest mostly registered the families' place of living in parish registers. So it is possible to track *Heuerling* families at least during their early family phase, as long as children were born. Just one example: Anna Maria Meyer, born in 1801, was a daughter from a *Heuerling* family in Löhne. She married twice, in 1827 and, after the death of her first husband, again in 1833. Her six children were born between 1828 and 1841. We see her in 1828 and 1830 on the 5 ha-farm 'Löhnebeck No. 22', owned by Johann Ernst Nolting. In 1833, we find her on 'Löhnebeck No. 20', a 3 ha-farm of a peasant named Friedrich Brinkmann. In 1834, she lives on 'Löhnebeck No. 14' (4 ha), in 1837 on Brackmann's 8 ha-farm 'Löhne königlich 27'. From 1838 on until her death in 1843 she lived on the farm of Johann Heinrich Hamelmann, 'Löhne königlich No. 5', with 13 ha the largest farm of her *Heuerling* tenancy.

We have no sources on the precise contracts between peasants and *Heuerlinge* for Löhne, but it is known from research in a nearby region that these contracts usually had a very individual design. Even on the same farm, different *Heuerling* families could have strongly varying contracts (Schlumbohm 1994). So there is good reason to assume that these families moved to a new farm whenever they could get better conditions elsewhere. There are also cases where *Heuerlinge* stayed on one farm for many years: Anna Catharina Dove (born 1796) was born on 'Löhne königlich No. 20', her parents' farm. When she married in 1822, 6 out of her 14 siblings were still alive, and her elder brother Casper Heinrich, who was her father's farm successor, had already been married for 20 years. She gave birth to seven children, so we know that she and her husband lived on the farm at least until 1840. There is only one exception: in 1830, when her third son was born, the priest recorded her address as 'Löhne königlich No. 21', but this was quite probably just a mistake.

Our findings confirm the already known large difference in the continuity of families on farmsteads between less modernized Westphalia and the much more market-oriented Groningen countryside. Interestingly, the non-landed part of the Westphalian rural population that at least owned houses tried to adhere to the family-oriented model of the peasants, with quite some success. In the Groningen countryside, on the other hand, for these same groups keeping houses within the family happened very rarely, suggesting a very weak family-house bond. They regularly bought and sold their house, sometimes to move to a different village, but also to change houses within a village. Next to this, in both regions there was in the nineteenth century a rising part of the rural population (casual labourers and *Heuerlinge*) that owned no house at all, and was wandering with their families from one building to another, wherever they could get shelter for some time. May be the ideal of a family house might have still existed for these groups in Westphalia; however, they were not in a position to even come close to it.

#### **4. The house/farm as an institution of social welfare**

For families, the farm or house on the one hand constituted the most important store of wealth, and on the other hand formed the major means of existence, next to the labour of family members. Because of these two aspects the farm and house could play a decisive role in securing the standard-of-living of the different family members. Several groups in society can be distinguished which were in theory relatively vulnerable, because they often did not have enough earning power to satisfy their basic needs with their own hands. Usually a healthy married couple was able to care of their young children. Though for widows and unmarried mothers with young unproductive children it was less easy to meet ends, and this was of course even more the case for orphans. Another potentially vulnerable category were old-aged whose physical power began to diminish, so they could not rely anymore on their labour to make a living. A third category are adult unmarried people, who if they were young and healthy could make a good living; however, this did not apply to the disabled and the older ones. The lifecycle servant system functioned mainly for the young grown-ups below the age of 30 to 35; consequently, for older persons it became more difficult to find work, while it was rather unusual for bachelors and spinsters to set up a household of their own.

Taking into account their two important characteristics (embodying wealth and labour opportunities) farmsteads and houses in theory could play an important role in providing social security to the vulnerable groups just mentioned acting as the basis of the rural social welfare system. Again the extent to and the way in which farmsteads and houses played this role differed strongly between Westphalia and Groningen.

In Westphalia, the attachment to a house was the main strand to any kind of secured retirement. Most old peasants wanted to stay in the house if they transferred the farmstead to a family member belonging to the younger generation, and some wanted to have an alternative plan in the transfer contract. Quite frequently, old peasants made the arrangement to give away the right of ownership, though still keeping the right to manage the farm. The goal was to tie one child (and its family) to the farm, as workforce and future care-taker, while the older

generation kept control of the farm. Some contracts make this obligation for a succeeding child to stay very explicit; in others it is just obvious. There were only few cases where the older generation gave up their ownership right and moved immediately to a separate house on the farm. During the process of handing over, almost every old couple or widowed parent declared to stay in the young people's household. Yet this does not necessarily mean that these arrangements persisted for a long time. Since peasant families often made assignments for optional separation in these farm transfer contracts, we know that they thought about potential conflicts. But because they had everything settled right in the beginning, there was no need to make another contract about separate households, and other sources about household composition are not available.

Old Westphalian peasants could have these retirement claims secured in land title registers. This is a very important point concerning the question who was responsible for the old people's well-being: The farm and the farm owners were obliged to pay or provide for the old peasants' retirement, not the children. If e.g. the succeeding child died early, a new farm owner would still be responsible for the old people, regardless if there was only the surviving spouse or a new marriage partner on the farm. Even if the farm was sold, the burden to take care of the former owners stayed with the farm, and it did not move to another child. Thus real estate was the most important means of social security for the aged, and other social groups, like day labourers, tried to replicate the peasants' system of old age security.

Old day labourers made the same kind of contracts in Westphalia as peasants, no matter how small their houses were. They stayed in the house, and the young succeeding generation had to take care of them. In this case there was indeed no option to separate into two different households within the same house, because the house was too small. The house of a day labourer or craftsman in this way functioned as his or her provision for old age. There are cases where couples had no children, or the children had no interest in the house, because they had married onto a farm or into a different house. Often these house owners made transfer and retirement contracts with other people, for instance a distant relative, the neighbouring peasant or someone who is not family at all. Also in this case, they gave away the property right and got in return the right to stay in the house and to be supported by the new owner(s), who either were also living in the house or elsewhere, e.g. when a peasant bought the house. If house owners had disabled or retarded children, they also often bound their successors to keep them in the house and to take care of them. This system meant that for a child to succeed on the parental farmstead or in the parental house was not only beneficial, but also involved accepting a lot of obligations towards vulnerable family members. As a consequence of this role of the house or farmstead, there were quite a lot of complex and extended households in Westphalia (Fertig 2007, 66; see also Schlumbohm 1994). Unfortunately due to the missing population or household lists, this cannot be shown in detail for Borgeln and Löhne.

Let's illustrate the handing over contracts of non-peasants in Borgelnby supplying an example. In August 1824, Maria Hense (\*1757) handed her house to Christoph Brinkmann (\*1793), who married a few weeks later. For all we know, the two contractual partners were not related, neither by kinship nor by godparent relations. Maria Hense's husband had died three years before, and her only daughter two years before, leaving a widower and three children. Her son Heinrich (\*1793) had married in 1817 and was called 'peasant', yet his real estate had only about 0.5 ha in 1830. Although Maria's father had a farm of about 8 ha (that was now owned by her stepbrother), and her mother also was born a peasant's daughter, this

was not the field where she looked for help when she became old. Her successor Christoph not only had to leave a room, a bed, and a trunk to Maria. He had to “*keep her in the house, support her with clothes, heat, and washing according to her age and rank, and take care of her appropriate funeral*”. If she would not be satisfied with his maintenance, it was up to her to leave the house and demand the total of 10 Taler per year. Above these provisions Christoph had to pay an inheritance compensation of 40 Taler to Maria’s children and grandchildren respectively. Maria Hänse died in 1826, but the relations between the two families persisted: in 1828, Heinrich became godparent to Christoph’s second child, Heinrich Brinkmann.<sup>11</sup>

The 1824 contract is very typical for house transfers of non-peasant families, how they settle their mutual interests during intergenerational transition. Yet in this case, the contract was closed between people without any kinship bond. There are other examples demonstrating that even when a house left the family, the contract between (older) house owner and (younger) successor was designed like a farm transfer contract. Except for cases when a peasant bought a house (for one of his non-succeeding children, or to remove it from a certain place), the usual way was to live together in the transferred house and to pay the house by maintaining the old owner and granting some compensation for his or her children.

Poorhouses were of minor importance in the Westphalian countryside. For the two parishes Borgeln and Löhne we did not find evidence for a local poorhouse. Only little research on poorhouses has been done until now, and mostly it’s from the perspective of the institutional organisation. However, for nearby Münsterland, it is known that the gentry endowed poorhouses in many places. The residents mostly were old and alone, unable to provide for a sufficient income. These people brought all their belongings with them, lived in separate rooms, and had to take care of their daily needs. There was no personnel, and no communal feeding, but all residents lived on their own means. The poorhouse offered shelter and financial support, but the inhabitants mostly still had different sources of income (economy of makeshift). In some cases, the officials tried and housed poor people in households, in part paying for accommodation, but in that case the poor also had to work for the household (Bernhardt 2012, Lerche 2008).

In Groningen, the house seldom played a comparable role. Only in very few cases the transfer contracts mention that a surviving parent was allowed to stay on the farm, and for other formal obligations there is even no proof at all, except for the payment in the next two or three years of very substantial amounts of money. Consequently, the share of extended or in other way complex households remained rather small with 10% in a sample of census lists of municipalities in the Groningen clay region, compared with a share of 40% in Borgeln in 1811/17 (see Fertig 2007, 66). Even under the farmers this regarded only 13% of the households (labourers 9%, employers and self-employed in industry and services 11%). In 6% of all households three generations were living together. However, if we follow these households over time, this living together is rarely a step in the process of family succession, as a lot of the married children living with their parents were not taken over the parental households. Many times a three-generation household was temporarily created because a newly-wed cou-

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<sup>11</sup> Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Abt. Westfalen, Grundakten Soest, Nr. 6607, p. 7.

ple did not yet find a house of their own. Children born out of wedlock were quite often living with their grandparents, either with or without their mother. And sometimes at the end of his or her life an old father or mother moved in with one of their children, presumably because they were no longer capable to take care for themselves.

The market value of the house or the farm constituted in a sense the pension of the old-aged. Most frequently old-aged clung to their house if possible, sometimes until they could no longer afford it. Keeping the ownership of the house and the control of the family business was guaranteeing an income stream even at old age, when one's own physical strength started to diminish. On the one hand needs started to diminish as the household shrunk in size, and on the other hand one still had the benefits of the garden, and perhaps directly own some extra money by their own hands, or indirectly by controlling the family business. According to the death certificates both males and females, and either day labourers, artisans or shopkeepers usually still had an occupation until they were very old. Poorer house owners could take in a (often unrelated) lodging family as a survival strategy, what happened as we have seen more often between 1812 and 1850. However, the large turn-over of such renting families suggests there were no other than financial obligations between them and the house owner.

Another strategy for the more well-to-do old-aged was to sell the farmstead or house to free capital to finance retirement. Contracts even between parents and children to care for their aging parents in return for taking over the house were rare, although not completely absent. A succeeding child usually paid large sums to obtain the farm. In May 1807 Corneliske (c1735-1809) – widow of Jacob Cornelis since 1780 and at that time living in the village of Ulrum – sold her farm of 40 ha doing 236 guilders annual rent in Warfhuizen for 7,500 guilders to her son Enne Jacobs Vonk (1774-1819),<sup>12</sup> who had married just a year before, another 1,200 guilders had to be paid to the noble land owner to ensure the eternal user rights of the land, which had not been settled before. Although the 72-year old widow first settled somewhere else, she might have returned to the farm in the last months of her life, as she died in Warfhuizen in 1809.

Rich old farmers and middle class people could retire in this way, settle in a house in one of the villages and live of the revenues of their former possessions. So they could prevent living together with a married couple, with all the accompanying complications, which was in Groningen by many families seemingly seen as an unattractive option (compare Verdon 1998). However, the less the value of the property, the less this was a feasible strategy. In that case the selling of the house was usually the first step to poverty. Next to this, a growing group of households in the first half of the nineteenth century did not own any real estates at all. Members of these poorer households had a very big risk to become destitute at the end of their life, reflecting Seebom Rowntree's (1901) poverty lifecycle. In Groningen, family members, even their grown-up children, did not seem to have much formal obligations towards these old people. The only responsibilities were that parents should take care of their off-spring, and children were under the guardian of their parents until about 25.

Often it was not the family living in the family house who acted as a social safety net, but it was the poor relief board. Around 1810 some 5% of the rural population was receiving

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<sup>12</sup> Groningen Archives, inv.nr 734-1516, fol. 90, and fol. 57.



poor relief to some extent, a percentage that was rising to 10% in the fifties of the nineteenth centuries (Paping 1995). Although these shares seem at first sight rather low, one has to take into account that about one third of the rural society was rich enough to avoid needing poor relief during any period of the family life cycle. The poorer parts of population only depended (partly) on the dole during certain phases of this life cycle. Actually, a quite large part of the Groningen labourers and petty artisans, perhaps even a majority, were receiving gifts during at least part of their life.

Increasingly in the first half of the nineteenth century poor relief boards started to not completely maintain poor households, but to supplement their other sources of income. Consequently, average sums of money paid per pauper were falling considerably in this period. Some households received regularly a small amount of money per week (a quarter or half a guilder) and for instance half a bread, and peat to burn in the winter, others even less. The most problematic cases were usually concentrated in a poorhouse owned by the board. Although, there were temporary predecessors at other places in the parish, in Kloosterburen around 1825 a special building for housing the poor came into being, originally a weaver's house. Weaver Johann Gerhard Hermann Werning (1787-1850), born in Emsdetten in Westphalia, married to a weaver's daughter whose grandfather started to weave in this house around 1750; his living-in mother-in-law (died 1828) was still owning the house. However, having five small surviving children and being confronted with a crisis in weaving because of industrial competition from elsewhere, they all became destitute around 1825 and the Roman Catholic poor relief board turned their house into a poorhouse, where they were allowed to stay for some years. The cadastral map of 1832 shows a long small building, if we look at later examples of poorhouses it consisted of a row of very small rooms each inhabited by one or more poor.

Thanks to some census lists (1826, 1838 and 1850) and the house numbers in the civil administration we can construct that between 1825 and 1850 at least 23 nuclear family units stayed in the poorhouse for longer or shorter periods. Taking into account that the about half the population of Kloosterburen was Roman Catholic, perhaps a quarter of the families had stayed in the poorhouse for some time. Most of the inhabitants were older widows, widowers and also one older bachelor, who according to the death registration spent their last years or months here. Children were not born in the poorhouse, except for one born out of wed-lock. In that last case the mother gave birth in 1828 to a second illegitimate child and died shortly afterwards in the poorhouse as did her second child. Twenty years later her first child was also living here with an illegitimate child. Only in one case a young widow with very young children found refuge in the poorhouse.

Interestingly, most of the elderly people living in the poorhouse had still owned a house around 1806 (when nearly all families owned a house in Kloosterburen), but had to sell it some years later. It has to be remarked that quite a lot of these elderly poor had children who were married and had a household of their own as farm labourers, tailors and carpenters. This suggests that the housing of their older parents was not felt as a responsibility of these children, so they had to go to the poorhouse. A nice example is Remt Scheltes Halsema (1773-1853), originally a small farmer who later became a labourer, but still owned as a widower two houses in 1830. At least from 1838 onwards until after 1850 he lived in the poorhouse, although his oldest married daughter had a small farm in Wehe, his oldest married son was a farm labourer moving to Texel (Holland), his four other daughters married a shoemak-

er, a tailor and two farm labourers and were all living in or near Kloosterburen. However, no child was prepared to house their impoverished father in his last years, even though the daughter marrying a shoemaker took over one of his houses.

Houses and farms were central for security in old age in both Groningen and Westphalia, although in very different ways. In Groningen the house's value on the market enabled aging people to arrange for their old days. When the house was not worth much, or people belonged to the landless group, the poor relief system usually came into the picture. If the aged needed support, it was as probable to find them in the poorhouse as with one of their children. The frequent notion of children's value for old age security, as found in theories about the 'value of children', cannot be confirmed by our research. This is also true if we look at the Westphalian villages. Again there is no evidence that children were seen as protection against poverty in old age. The house and the farm were central in Westphalian plans for old age provision, but it followed a completely different logic. Farm and also house owners tried to keep their real estate in the family, and handed it to one of their children whenever possible. In return, they stayed either in the household or in a separate building near the farmstead, and it was their successor's duty to maintain them for the rest of their life. Even if the property went to someone who was not kin-related, e.g. because of the death of the heir and the remarriage of the surviving spouse, or even if a house was handed to a non-family person, the old people adhered to the traditional system of provision on the farm or in the house.

## 5. Conclusion

The meaning of the house – and in connection the house-family bond – for peasant and non-peasant families in the Dutch province of Groningen and the Prussian province of Westphalia in eighteenth and nineteenth century differed substantially. Even though both belong to the north-western European family system, farmers in both cases had strong property rights and the regions were rather close to each other geographically, it became clear that families in these rural societies adhered in general to two structurally completely different general models.

In the first model – rather well-known in the literature for many rural societies – the family and the house were strongly attached to each other, both economically and symbolically. The family house formed the backbone of the society, and family strategies were mainly directed towards keeping the house within the family. Especially peasant farms mostly went into the hands of children, or else another near relative. Such a system could of course only exist if the family had considerable property rights concerning their houses and farmsteads they lived in, for instance as freeholders or hereditary tenants. Only in exceptional cases farms and houses were sold to persons outside the family, for instance when the family ran into heavy debts.

As this system is usually found in rather 'traditional' societies where market dependence of households is relatively weak, the role of money is limited and the market for real estates is not well-developed, bankruptcies are rare. Economic distress of families in these societies does not result in extensive borrowing but in lowering consumption. The continuity of the family farm or house over the generations was secured by a system of impartible inher-

itance of estates combined with monetary compensation of siblings. Also, the farm/house did provide the pension of old peasants (who organised that they could stay, maintained by their successor), provided shelter for disabled and juvenile family members, and could even sometimes act as a harbour for other children in times of crisis. In this way, it also played a crucial role in the local social welfare system. Consequently, all family members benefited to some extent directly or indirectly from the well-being of the farm or other family business, having an interest in keeping the farm intact, what strengthened the ties between family and house, and at the same time resulted in many large complex and three-generation households.

The best example of this model were the peasants in both villages in Westphalia under study, although there are some signs of weakening due to the rising importance of the market in the economy, resulting in the development of a land market in the course of the nineteenth century. If feasible, other Westphalian families owning some real estates as for instance houses were also adhering to this model, but because of their financial vulnerability they were less successful in preserving the house within the family than peasants. On the other hand, a numerous and steadily rising group of farm and proto-industrial labourer families in Westphalia did not have any possessions and were often continuously moving around between dwellings in the village. For these landless poor, any attachment to a house was only a theoretical option. Study of these often neglected rural groups – comprising for instance about the majority of Westphalian rural societies – show that this first model of strong attachment between house and family becomes less relevant with the rise in rural proletariat, a development taking place in large parts of the countryside in western Europe in the nineteenth century.

<b>Family-oriented model</b>	<b>Market-oriented model</b>
<b>-Limited development of land and house market</b>	-Well-developed land and house market
<b>-Strong attachment between house and family</b>	-Farms and houses are financial investments
<b>-Farms/houses are kept in the family</b>	-Farms are easily sold on the market
<b>-Old age provision supplied by farm (owner), not children</b>	-Value of the real estates constituted the old age provision
<b>-Shelter and inheritance compensation for young people supplied by farms</b>	-Successor does not have responsibilities to other family members after paying the farm
<b>-Strong ties between family members</b>	-Presumably weaker ties between family members
<b>-Land-poor house owners follow peasant model, yet weaker connection between house and family</b>	-For land-poor house owners the house was just giving shelter; hardly any connection between house and family

In a second, seemingly more modern model, houses and farms in the countryside were – mainly – perceived by families and their members as embodying financial capital, floating on markets, to be bought and sold up to prevailing situations of families and individuals. The occurrence of this model seemed to be related to a nearly complete market dependence of households, and usually results in the existence of a vivid market in real estates. In this model houses of course also functioned as places of consumption, and of production for the peasant

and the non-agrarian part of rural society. Nevertheless, family attachment to specific houses was quite limited, and family relations were apparently less strong than market considerations. They were bought as the basis for economic activity, and sold as valuable assets, or in case of financial problems, the last to appear more often due to the strong market dependence of the families. If possible, the older generation tried to keep the houses as long as possible to secure their life in old age, but not always with success. Since many children established their own households already before their parents died or retired, they usually had left the house by that time and often had bought a house or farm on the market. Consequently, near relatives were relatively few as successors and houses and farmsteads frequently moved into the hands of strangers.

In the Groningen countryside, we encounter this second model most clearly for the house-owning labourers and non-agricultural households, where family continuity in dwellings was rare, and there was also a large turn-over of houses. Farmer families showed a higher tendency to keep farmsteads within the family, but still every generation the majority of farms was sold. Only the largest farmers tried to adhere to some extent to the first model showing a strong preference for the succession of sons, although even their farms moved to non-relatives quite often compared to the Westphalian farms. Real estates like houses and farms themselves did not play a role in the Groningen social welfare system; however the value they embodied did, by securing the standard-of-living of the older generation. Interestingly, just like in Westphalia a large and increasing group of have-nots, mainly unskilled farm labourers and petty artisans, did not have any connection to the (rented) houses they lived in, and were continuously moving around. This group did increase sharply not only due to the rising share of labourers, but also because of the many labourer families losing their house in the first half of the nineteenth century. As the individual responsibility for family members was limited, social welfare had to be organised on a village level by the poor relief board, with a poorhouse to give shelter to impoverished old-aged and other paupers.

With the rise of the market, the money economy, the social welfare state and the diminishing number of farms in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the second ('modern') model presumably became continuously more of importance compared to first ('traditional') model in rural societies. In specific societies these two models could easily exist next to each other, with the family-oriented model usually being the ideal for families, while the actual situation forced families to behave in correspondence to the market-oriented model in disposing of their houses. Consequently, often the wealthier a family was, the more easily it was to keep houses and landed property within the family.

The rise in the market-oriented model of the house-family bond at the expense of the family-oriented model has also important implications for the development of social chances of people in the past. In general, a strict adherence to the family-oriented model will have resulted in a much more rigid society, making especially upward intergenerational social mobility difficult to attain for individual members. The market-oriented model with its market for farmsteads, houses and nieces will have created much more opportunities for upward, but also for downward social mobility of children. Although we restricted ourselves in this paper to rural societies, it might be presumed that urban societies – with for instance their numerous migrants – usually fitted much more in the relatively dynamic market-oriented model of the house-family bond. This hypothesis, however, still has to be tested by detailed research of the continuity of specific townhouses within families.

Notwithstanding these general points, it has to be taken into account that, besides the two models proposed in this paper, possibly as important for the relevance of the house-family bond is the development over time of a third and largely neglected group of completely unpropertied poor households active in unskilled wage-work, proto-industry and other badly rewarded work, and in many respects comparable with the urban underclass. Whatever function one's own house can have as a symbol of family identity, as a place to produce and live, as a store or value and as part of the social welfare system providing security for family members, it could not play such roles for those vulnerable families who did not own a house or other real estates at all. It might be a good idea to concentrate future historical research much more on this 'hidden' and in research largely neglected rural underclass, which formed such a large part of the rural population, at least in nineteenth century Groningen and Westphalia.

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